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ABSTRACT

The university professor who participates in inservice training may be either a stimulator, who conducts a particular type of program proposed and planned rather fully by someone else, or a consultant, who provides training in the processes of problem identification and solution within a general area. The former role demands extensive preplanning within the group and definite commitments to certain reading and language arts activities (materials, strategies, and evaluation). The latter role, involving much more responsibility for preplanning, is that of a consultant who enables participants to become competent in identifying and solving specific problems (e.g., in reading). Individual conferences and small-group interaction enhance the participants' progress, confidence, security, and respect for each other. Adequate preplanning for either role appears to be essential for success and change in behavior of teachers. (Author/JM)

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ABSTRACT (Dr. Helen J. James)

THE SECOND FACE OF INSERVICE: THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR/CONSULTANT

The university professor who participates in inservice training may be (1) a catalyst or stimulator to conduct a particular type of program proposed and planned rather fully by someone else or (2) a trainer in processes of problem-identification and -solution within a general area.

The former role demands extensive preplanning within the group and definite commitments to certain reading or language arts activities (materials, strategies, and evaluation). The consultant is a resource to provide information, demonstrations, practice, and suggestions for classroom implementation. When goals have been met, the relationship ends.

The latter role gives much more responsibility for preplanning to the consultant, whose goal is to enable participants to become competent in identification and solution of very specific problems (e.g., in reading). Continuing delimitation of problems as variables are noted and measured enables participants to plan steps to solve the problems. Individual conferences and small-group interaction enhance the participants' progress, confidence, security, and respect for each other. The involvement of administrators and specialist personnel in a school permit better communication and transfer of leadership from the consultant to personnel in the school.

Adequate preplanning for either type of role appears to be essential for success and change in behavior of teachers. Utilizing talents of participants increases the interaction within the group and encourages experimentation and creative teaching.

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THE SECOND FACE OF INSERVICE: THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR/CONSULTANT

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Broadly speaking, there are "three faces of inservice": the resources of a state department of education, the services of university personnel, and the projects of school district inservice directors or supervisors. These three frequently join in extensive ventures so that a variety of needs may be met within a state, county, district, or school. Many states utilize the "Right to Read" funds to update teachers' skills and/or to introduce new concepts of materials and strategies.

Inservice training has come to be viewed as ongoing commitments to improve educational programs (2, 3, 4). Planning, implementing, and evaluating various phases of training lead to new plans. In reading and language arts, because of the nature of some of the training required, there is a demand

for involvement of university personnel for certain periods of time. In Florida, through what is termed the "Teacher Center Projects," a professor may become a consultant for one term to a specific group; this may be half or full load, thus permitting an indepth involvement.

Two types of participation appear to be utilized, the choice being dependent on the degree of preplanning by the group to be served. A university professor may be asked to act as a catalyst or stimulator to conduct a particular type of training proposed and preplanned by the participants. In such cases, there are clear-cut statements of exactly what is to be done. The second type of involvement may require the professor to train members of the group in the processes of problem-identification and -solution within a general area. In reading, such training would require an investigation of each participant's special needs and much individualization of work within the group.

The catalyst/stimulator role is usually accomplished by interaction with the entire group. New materials may be demonstrated so that teachers may try them and report their successes, failures, and/or problems. Strategies of classroom management may be described and demonstrated, followed by in-class experimentation and reports from teachers on their results. Informal assessment procedures may be taught and practiced; teachers may utilize them and receive assistance at a later session in interpretation of results. Establishing

developmental reading programs within grade levels at the middle school or high school level may be planned and implemented; evaluation plans are usually a part of the original planning. Intra-school communication channels may be demonstrated and tried, with feedback to the group of the changes brought about by the exchange of information about pupils' progress.

The catalyst does what the group requests, bringing in other resource persons as necessary to provide the best training. When the tasks specified have been finished, the university professor withdraws from the scene, and the relationship ends.

There is value in having someone outside a group undertake specific assignments if the participants did adequate planning and are truly committed to their plans. Some flexibility is desirable, since the consultant may know that some foundations must be laid in order to attain the goals of the group. The consultant's goal must be to train sufficiently to leave leadership within the group to maintain momentum for change.

The inservice consultant who undertakes to train a group in the processes of problem-identification and -solution accepts more responsibility as the consultant because of the need for more individualization (1). Some training occurs in a total-group session, but many one-to-one interactions are required to bring about changes in each teacher's behavior. The consultant must

accept each participant's initial problem statement as suitable, even if it seems to be rather extensive in scope. Then, by guiding the participant in the identification of variables in the problem, the consultant may be able to aid the participant in delimiting the problem.

Occasional total-group sessions permit participants working on similar problems to exchange ideas in small-group meetings of short duration. The reinforcement and feelings of success are enhanced by the small-group interaction. Too, the exchange of ideas often enables an individual to see better ways to solve an identified problem.

As the consultant works with individuals, it is possible to discover strengths of participants that can be filtered into the total-group sessions. The strengthening of feelings of confidence in self and respect for others stimulates many teachers to experiment and to become more creative in their teaching strategies. If the consultant can encourage sharing, there is less and less need for the consultant's services. There is a transfer of leadership in problem-identification to participants. Consequently, the consultant's goal of training others to assume responsibilities is met, and the consultant fades from the scene.

Experiences in working with faculties and with selected teachers from a school district indicate that both types of roles can be successful. In either case, it is essential to know the views of administrators and supervisors concerning

reading programs, classroom management procedures, and the pupil population. Failure to ascertain such information can create blocks to change, even to acceptance of the consultant. Actually, the entire project is an exercise in futility, and the respect for inservice training drops.

One example may serve to demonstrate how easily failure can ensue. An inservice director sent a request for the writer to provide a one-day training session for a specific group of content-area teachers. Only three days' advance notice was given. The teachers were told simply to report on that day for "help on reading in the content areas." There was no way to arrange for preplanning prior to the day's session. The inservice director was very vague about prior training that the teachers had experienced, could not supply information about types of classes, and could say only that the pupils were from a rural area. It was known that "rural" in that county could mean middle-class farmers as well as extremely poor families on welfare.

The writer began the day's session with a brief explanation of what "reading instruction" in content areas can mean. The participants were then asked to work individually or in small groups to state a problem that they would like assistance with. A supply of texts, journals, and sample lesson plans were made available for the participants' use while the problem statements were studied and grouped to permit sharing among the teachers.

As might be surmised, many problem statements were really vague or ambiguous questions that were far removed from the participants' actual instructional practices. Nevertheless, a tentative agenda was developed to give some time to all types of questions that had value for the particular content area. Individual questions received short written replies by the end of the day.

Approximately twenty per cent of the teachers entered wholeheartedly into the small-group activities. Another thirty per cent accepted the situation and interacted with a little enthusiasm. That left half of them as "physically present, psychologically absent" group members. A variety of audio-visual aids were utilized for those who were interested, and handouts of types of activities useful to incorporate reading and study skills in the content areas were accepted but not really studied.

During breaks, the writer found that many of the teachers resented the choice of the date for the session and the failure of the inservice director to make known the possibilities. Acceptance of their feelings reduced some hostilities, and there was more interaction among small groups as long as the writer worked with a group. One had to conclude that the teachers lacked prior training for working on the topic as well as skills of communication. End-of-day evaluations rated the writer as "well prepared and flexible" but rated the session as "having little value."

A final act by the writer was to summarize the day's activities for the inservice director and to evaluate the session. It was possible to state that prior planning with the teachers would have aided everyone concerned. The point was apparently well taken, for a succeeding assignment in the same county was preceded by lengthy telephone conversations between the writer and the supervisor responsible for a group of Title I reading teachers. Every activity was carefully developed, and there was not only enthusiasm but also real growth evident among the teachers.

On the success side, the writer has found that a term's involvement with individual schools can be very meaningful if administrators and specialist personnel are involved with the teachers. Constant feedin by all enabled teachers to work on problems with feelings of security. The sharing of successes and occasional failures in their efforts enhanced the harmonious handling of problems that crossed all communication lines.

In one instance, an English teacher discovered unusual talents in diagnosing pupils' problems from some simple informal tests. Subsequently, that teacher was able to teach others the processes used. Later, the entire group decided to focus attention (with different emphases at different grade levels) on the same types of problems. Coming from within the group, the decision was easily implemented.

Working within a school and meeting teachers for individual conferences requires time. If such conferences enable a teacher

to learn techniques that make the instructional task easier, the teacher does not resent giving up a planning period. Furthermore, the consultant's mention of the way a teacher chose to solve a problem raises the teacher's self-esteem and seems to promote additional effort to make changes.

Specialist personnel sometimes feel like outsiders in the general school setting because they are not able to interact in department meetings. Many say, "I meet with myself when departments have meetings." Their involvement in problem-identification often leads to exchanges of ideas with several teachers who are working on the same problem from the opposite point of view. Increasingly, specialists are viewed as "members of the faculty," rather than peripheral staff members.

Other types of consultation by the writer include definite assignments to cover a specific body of material. The participants receive a list of the objectives, the direction to bring a statement of problems, and an invitation to share techniques that have been successful. On the first day, grade-level or content-area groups share problems and delimit their list; they often receive answers from their peers at that first meeting. Various activities related to the objectives are made available, with teachers permitted to choose how they attain an objective. Planned sharing of teaching techniques emerges from having small-group tasks of listing these and noting the time required to explain them.

On subsequent dates, usually several weeks apart, the participants do much of the training, sometimes for the total group but often for interested small groups. The writer includes a few special activities to teach such things as use of the newspaper in the classroom and vocabulary games, thereby stimulating some teachers to try new ideas. Teachers' activities are duplicated so that sharing is possible. Since several schools may be represented, there can be dissemination of information throughout a county.

In conclusion, it appears that the university professor/consultant serves as a resource in various ways. Whether as a stimulator or a process-trainer, the consultant can utilize the talents of participants to enhance change and can transfer leadership to the trainees.

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